

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

SUITE 2320 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6301
(202) 225-6375
TTY: (202) 226-4410
<http://science.house.gov>

October 17, 2007

Mr. Rex Tillerson, CEO
ExxonMobil Corporation
5959 Las Colinas Boulevard
Irving, Texas 75039-2298

Dear Mr. Tillerson,

No issue has more vividly highlighted the consequences of global warming than the threat to the survival of polar bears caused by global warming. The Department of the Interior announced last December that the Department was considering listing the polar bear under the Endangered Species Act. Despite efforts by Secretary Kempthorne to refrain from using the words "climate change" or "global warming" in explaining why the polar bears' habitat was deteriorating, it is clear that global warming is the proximate cause for the melting of Arctic sea ice and the loss of the bear's habitat.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is collecting comments on the proposed listing of the polar bears. The listing is a matter of some contention, partly because its economic implications are still uncertain. For example, if such a listing led to habitat protection steps that interfered in any way with production of oil in Alaska's North Slope, this could directly hurt ExxonMobil's economic interest since it is a partner in production at that field.

ExxonMobil, despite its long history of funding prominent critics of global warming, now publicly admits that this warming is occurring, and that evidence is particularly noticeable in the Polar Regions. It also proclaims its commitment to biodiversity and actions to limit climate change. (http://www.exxonmobil.com/Corporate/energy_climate_views.aspx.) In a letter to this Subcommittee of June 1, 2007, ExxonMobil claimed that your financial "support seeks to ... increase policymakers' reliance on sound science... and expand the foundation of knowledge for sound policymaking through support for strategic, nonpartisan, and objective research on relevant topics." Therefore, I was disappointed to read that ExxonMobil continues its efforts to build doubts about the impacts of climate change by funding challenges to the science underlying the proposed listing of polar bears.

In September, the journal Ecological Complexity published an article described as a "viewpoint" by seven scientists (titled: "Polar Bears of western Hudson Bay and climate change: Are warming spring air temperatures the "ultimate" survival control factor?"). Prominent among the seven authors were four widely recognized "climate doubt" scientists who have been identified in the past as having received funds from ExxonMobil and other petroleum interests: Dr. Willie Soon, Dr. Sally Baliunas, Dr. David Legates and Dr. Tim Ball of Canada. Dr. Soon wrote in the "acknowledgments" in Ecological Complexity article:

"W. Soon's effort for the completion of this paper was partially supported by grants from the Charles G. Koch Charitable Foundation, American Petroleum Institute, and Exxon-Mobil Corporation."

While scientific articles published in Ecological Complexity are peer-reviewed, opinion essays are not. The article in pre-publication form shows that it was received on March 1, 2007 and accepted for publication on March 2, 2007 - confirming that no peer review was conducted. In every other respect, the paper appears to be a scientific article complete with a table of descriptive statistics, charts showing average seasonal temperatures in Churchill, Manitoba, charts purporting to show correlations between temperatures and an arctic oscillation index, and a bibliography of 101 sources. To a lay person, this "viewpoint" is indistinguishable from a peer-reviewed journal article.

This opinion piece challenges the scientific studies that undergird the Fish and Wildlife Service's consideration of listing the polar bear as "threatened," by arguing that "(a)ny role of external forcing by anthropogenic [human-caused] greenhouse gases remains difficult to identify" and "that the extrapolation of polar bear disappearance is highly premature." Rejecting warming of the climate as a causal factor, the authors offer a variety of other possibilities for the decline in polar bear populations, including increased human-animal interaction which could have a disruptive effect on their behavior. (Dyck, Soon, et. al., "Polar Bears of western Hudson Bay and climate change: Are warming spring air temperatures the "ultimate" survival control factor?" Ecological Complexity, V. 4, Issue 3, September 2007.)

Again, this is an opinion piece, not peer-reviewed science, but misuse of the essay is already occurring. The article is cited by the State of Alaska in their filing with the Fish and Wildlife Service opposing listing of the polar bear as threatened. (http://www.adfg.state.ak.us/special/esa/polarbears/state_comments4-9-07.pdf.) The opinion piece is cited a total of six times in the state's filing, as the state offers the author's unreviewed opinion about human-animal interaction and "excessive handling" as a credible explanation for observed weight loss and declining health. If the Governor of Alaska and the Commissioner of the Department of Fish and Game cannot tell whether this paper is science or an elaborate editorial, what would a less sophisticated audience think?

This essay, funded in part with ExxonMobil money, is now a key exhibit for those who oppose a listing of the polar bear as threatened and deny that climate change is eroding the bear's habitat.

Mr. Tillerson

Page 3

Oct. 17, 2007

To people outside of the scientific community, one Ph.D. may seem much like another. Certainly ExxonMobil knows better, however. Yet according to Dr. Soon, an astrophysicist by profession, ExxonMobil funded the development of his "opinions" on global warming and its potential impact on polar bear populations. None of the other authors make any sort of disclosure regarding support for their work.

Dr. Soon has a right to publish anything he wants regardless of his expertise. ExxonMobil has the right to fund any research or publications it wishes. However, the Congress and the public have a right to know why ExxonMobil is funding a scientist whose writing is outside his area of expertise to create the impression that expert scientists have conducted rigorous, peer-reviewed work that says the problems with the polar bears are unproven or unserious.

The Subcommittee hereby requests copies of all the records (as defined in the attached Appendix) in the possession of either the Corporation or the Foundation relating to support since 2002 for work by Dr. Soon, or by any other individual or group, relating to polar bears (*Ursus maritimus*) or other arctic fauna. Perhaps these materials will show that ExxonMobil's motive is to genuinely support sound science—your stated purpose in the previous letter sent to the Subcommittee—that provides a foundation of knowledge for policymaking. On its face, however, it is hard to understand how supporting work by an astrophysicist into polar bears could possibly contribute anything worthwhile to public discourse.

The Subcommittee previously wrote to you on May 17 and asked for information on the grants provided by ExxonMobil in 2006 as well as information on grants that had been awarded by the Corporation or the ExxonMobil Foundation in 2007. While you provided a copy of your 2006 990-PF form in response, as required by law, you refused to provide any information regarding awards that have been made in 2007.

In denying the Committee's earlier request for 2007 information, your staff noted that "(a)ny list we could provide you now would be incomplete, as we anticipate making additional awards throughout the year. It would not be fair to current or prospective grant recipients to publish a list before all of this year's grants have been awarded." It may be that since we are just over halfway through 2007, not all grants have been given out. It is, however, difficult for us to understand how providing information that will ultimately be made public in a few months concerning work not yet completed could, in any way be unfair to either current or prospective grant recipients.

Therefore, by this letter, I again request any information regarding grants awarded to date in 2007, to be broken out by recipient, purpose and amount. Please also state whether the funds came from the Corporation or the Foundation. To make compiling your response somewhat easier, please provide the information requested only for the type of awards that would be classified as "Public Policy" in your 990-PF disclosure even if they are made by the Corporation and therefore not required to be included on the 990-PF form.

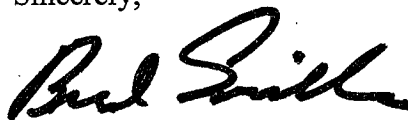
Mr. Tillerson
Page 4
Oct. 17, 2007

Please provide the materials requested in this letter by November 6, 2007. Please provide two copies of these materials—one for the majority and one for the minority staff—and deliver them to Room B-374, Rayburn House Office Building.

If your staff have any questions or needs additional information, please have them contact Dan Pearson of the Subcommittee staff at (202) 225-8772

Your prompt attention to this matter is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Miller", written in a cursive style.

BRAD MILLER
Chairman
Subcommittee on
Investigations & Oversight

Attached: Enclosure

ATTACHMENT

1. The term "records" is to be construed in the broadest sense and shall mean any written or graphic material, however produced or reproduced, of any kind or description, consisting of the original and any non-identical copy (whether different from the original because of notes made on or attached to such copy or otherwise) and drafts and both sides thereof, whether printed or recorded electronically or magnetically or stored in any type of data bank, including, but not limited to, the following: correspondence, memoranda, records, summaries of personal conversations or interviews, minutes or records of meetings or conferences, opinions or reports of consultants, projections, statistical statements, drafts, contracts, agreements, purchase orders, invoices, confirmations, telegraphs, telexes, agendas, books, notes, pamphlets, periodicals, reports, studies, evaluations, opinions, logs, diaries, desk calendars, appointment books, tape recordings, video recordings, e-mails, voice mails, computer tapes, or other computer stored matter, magnetic tapes, microfilm, microfiche, punch cards, all other records kept by electronic, photographic, or mechanical means, charts, photographs, notebooks, drawings, plans, inter-office communications, intra-office and intra-departmental communications, transcripts, checks and canceled checks, bank statements, ledgers, books, records or statements of accounts, and papers and things similar to any of the foregoing, however denominated.
2. The terms "relating," "relate," or "regarding" as to any given subject means anything that constitutes, contains, embodies, identifies, deals with, or is in any manner whatsoever pertinent to that subject, including but not limited to records concerning the preparation of other records.